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ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers interested in promoting writing and young authors at their schools, this booklet contains guidelines and suggestions for creating a young authors club. Included are a plan for creating the club, a sample fact sheet for promoting it, a parent letter, guidelines and suggestions, timelines for planning club meetings, activities for three club meetings, culminating activities that cover binding books and making booklets with dry mount, and ideas to share and display books. (EL)

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Starting a Young Authors Club

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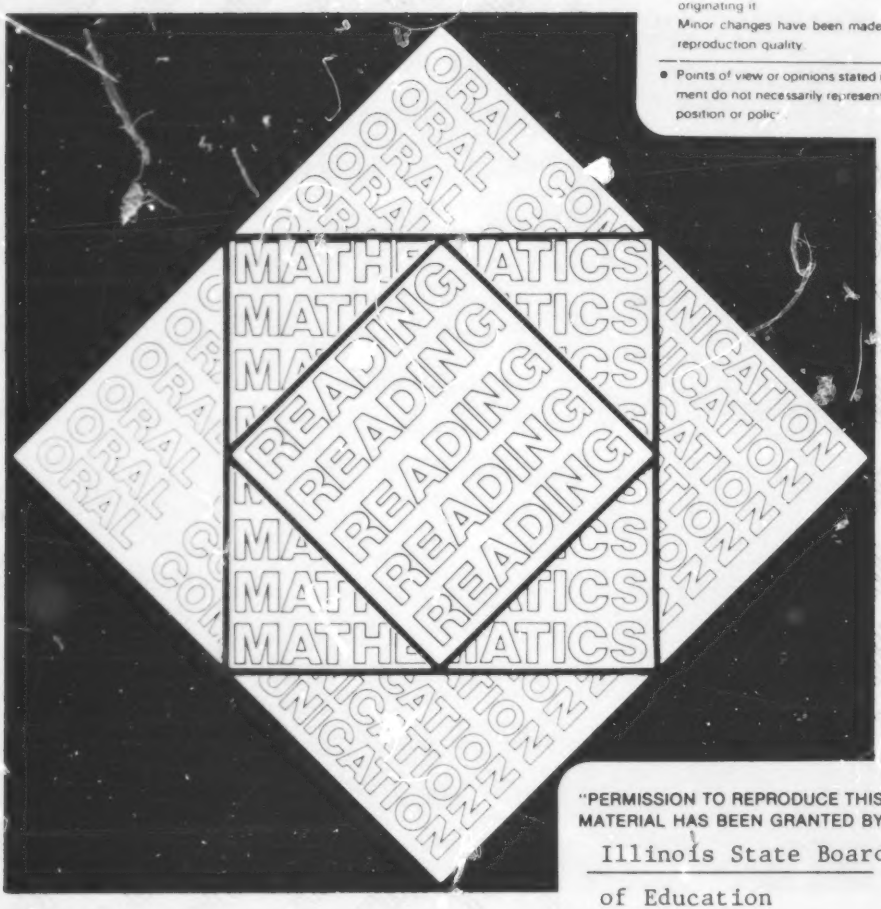

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PREFACE

Interested in promoting writing at your school? Need something new to try that will produce exciting and rewarding results? Try a YOUNG AUTHORS CLUB!

The club is developed as a result of:

1. Interest in children's writing and the writing process;
2. The philosophy that *all* children can write, therefore, fulfilling the desire to work with students at all grade levels;
3. Involvement with the State Young Authors Conference;
4. Commitment to having a greater number of students from the school write books for the Local and State Young Authors Conference.

Where to begin? The Illinois State Board of Education appreciates the contributions of Victoria Kiviranta, Michelle Koppenhagen and Molly Norwood of Palatine District #15 who wrote this booklet containing guidelines and suggestions for creating a Young Authors Club. Included are a proposal, a parent letter, timelines, and an outline of activities that can be used. We hope this material will be beneficial to you in promoting writing and young authors at your school.

Note: By mid-October all school districts receive information and guidelines regarding the State Young Authors Conference held in May of each year. This conference, *not* a contest, honors young authors throughout the state. Information regarding the State Young Authors Conference is available upon request from:

Program Planning and Development
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777
217/782-2826

A GOOD BEGINNING

(Getting Started)

The first step in planning a Young Authors Club is to develop a purpose, goals and objectives. The following items should be considered during this initial planning:

- Sponsors,
- Purpose,
- Goals and objectives,
- Grade level(s) to be included,
- Maximum number of students,
- Meeting place and date,
- Timeline for activities.

In some school districts it may be necessary to submit a proposal or plan for approval. Following is an example of one school district's proposal for a Young Authors Club.

SAMPLE PLAN

YOUNG AUTHORS CLUB

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for students to become young authors.

Objectives:

- To develop and strengthen basic skills (reading and writing) through writing books.
- To provide motivation for writing.
- To stimulate creative thinking.
- To be a medium to share writing between grade levels.
- To provide an opportunity to work with peers.
- To provide an introduction to different styles and types of writing.
- To develop an understanding of the writing process.

Meetings:

Tuesday
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Grades K-3
15 students total — Room 100
Grades 4-6
20 students total — Room 203

Timeline:

Sept. 1-10	Motivational posters displayed
Sept. 10-12	Sign up and selection of members
Sept. 13	Letter to parents
Sept. 20	First meeting
May 29	Last meeting

Sponsors:

K-3	Mr. Jones
4-6	Mrs. Smith

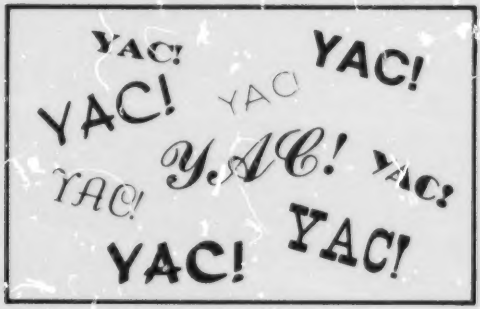
Capturing the attention and interest of students is the next important step in the development of a Young Authors Club. This can be achieved by displaying attractive, eye-catching posters throughout the school. Use the acronym YAC and keep it a secret from staff as well as students.

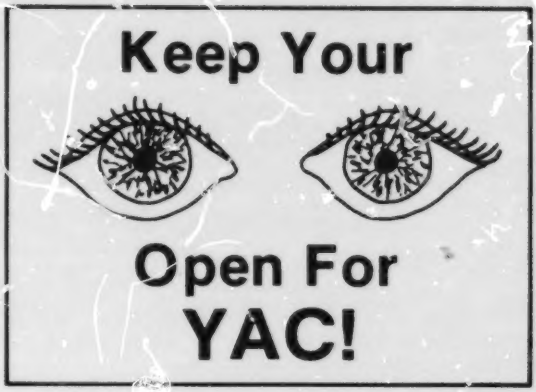
Display posters for approximately 10 days. when interest has peaked, it is time to share the secret through

- an assembly.
- a presentation by an author of children's literature.
- sponsors giving a "sales pitch" in individual classrooms.
- any combination of activities.

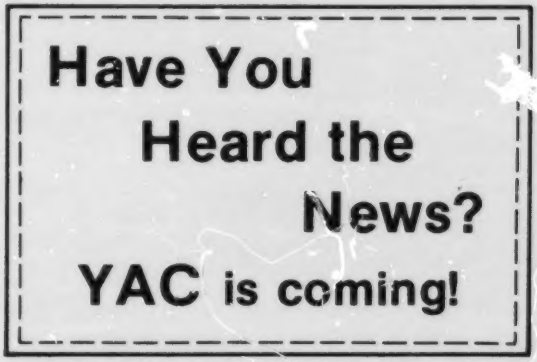
For maximum effectiveness it is vital that these presentations be done in exciting and dramatic ways. It is recommended that some type of Young Authors Club "fact sheet" be distributed. This "fact sheet" should contain the purpose of the club and how to become a Young Authors Club member.

EXAMPLES OF POSTERS

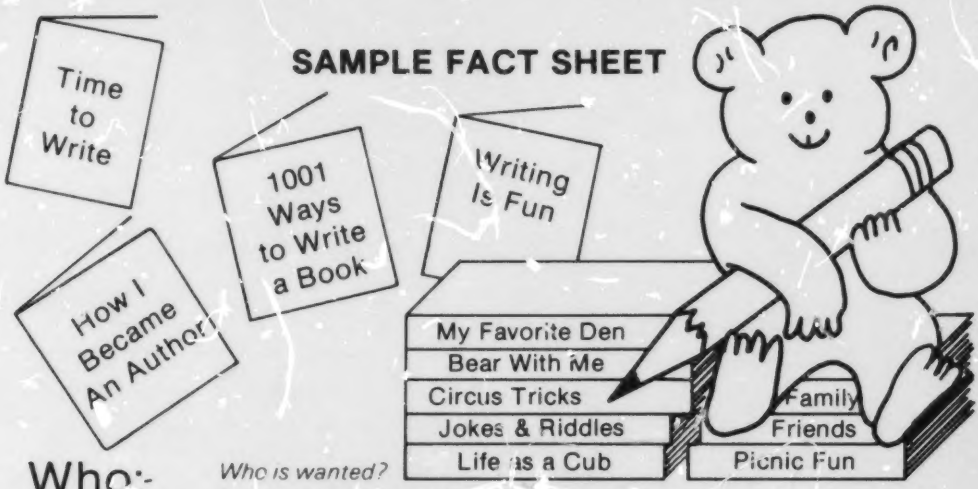




(magazine collage)



SAMPLE FACT SHEET



Who: *Who is wanted?*
Any student interested in writing —
Any student who would like to become an author —
Any student — especially YOU!

What: *What can you do?*
Join YAC — Young Authors Club
Learn how to write books, jokes, riddles, and plays.

When: *When can you start!*
The first meeting is September 20 during our lunch hour (11:30-12:30).

Where: *Where do you go?*
Grade K-3 students become authors in Room 100.
Grade 4-6 students become authors in Room 203.

Why: *Why join in?*
To become an author and to participate in many fun, rewarding writing activities!

How: *How do you join YAC?*
Fill out the bottom of this sheet and return to your teacher TODAY!

YES! I want to join YAC - Young Authors Club

Name_____ Grade_____

Teacher_____ Room_____

Encourage all students to become Young Authors Club members. Any student should be eligible to join including students in special programs (LD, EMH, BD, Bilingual, Chapter 1, etc.).

If more students want to join the Young Authors Club than can be accommodated, have a lottery using the tear-off slips from the bottom of the "fact sheet." If the response is overwhelming, a waiting list may be prepared. Another alternative would be to seek an additional sponsor.

After the students have been selected, send a letter to their parents. The letter should state the purpose of the club and the responsibility of members and parents. (Sample letter on following page.)

Alternatives

There are several alternatives regarding scheduling and student participation that may be considered in organizing a Young Authors Club.

Scheduling

Club meeting times other than the lunch hour may include before and after school, Saturdays, or during a school-scheduled "activity period." A consideration in determining scheduling would be the transportation of children to and from school.

Student Participation

The number of students participating in a Young Authors Club depends on the availability of club sponsors and school enrollment. The club's members may be composed of

- students from all grade levels (i.e., all students in the school eligible to participate),
- a specific grade level (a Young Authors Club for second graders),
- a combination of grades (a club for fifth and sixth graders only).

SAMPLE LETTER

_____ SCHOOL

September 13, 19____

Dear Parents:

Your child has been selected to become a member of the Young Authors Club (YAC) at _____ School. The purpose of this club is to encourage a variety of writing activities. Members will be required to write a book for participation in the District and State Young Authors Conference.

Your child has been made aware of the amount of extra time and responsibility required to be a YAC member. We plan to meet during (TIME AND DAY). As publishing time approaches, it may be necessary for members to come before school or stay after school to complete their projects. Also at this time we will be asking for some parent assistance.

This will be an exciting and rewarding experience. Please read and sign the Young Authors Club Contract with your child and have him/her bring it to our first meeting. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

YAC Sponsors

YOUNG AUTHORS CLUB CONTRACT

I will be an active, responsible member of _____ School's Young Authors Club. I understand this involves devoting extra time and effort to this activity.

_____ _____

Student Signature Date

I give my permission for _____ to become a member of _____ School's Young Authors Club. I will support and encourage my child's participation in this club.

_____ _____

Parent Signature Date

AN ACTION-PACKED MIDDLE

(Guidelines and Suggestions)

READY

SET

GO

Careful planning of each meeting is a must.

Time is limited and deadlines for District and State Young Author Conferences must be met. The State Young Authors Guidelines are annually mailed to District Superintendents by October. The club sponsors should obtain a copy so that activities will coincide with the State Program. Therefore, it is imperative to plan and adhere to a timeline and schedule of activities. However, if the school or school district is not participating in any conferences, it may not be necessary to follow suggested timelines. In any case, a Young Authors Club can be a valuable and rewarding activity.

TIMELINES FOR PLANNING YOUNG AUTHORS CLUB MEETINGS

Get-acquainted activities (SEPTEMBER)

Interviewing techniques
Writing activities using members' names

Authoring a book (OCTOBER-FEBRUARY)

Preparation (October)

1. Discuss story parts (setting, characters, problem, action, climax, conclusion, etc.)
2. Read examples of a variety of writing styles
3. Discuss the "5 W's" (who, what, where, when, why)
4. Brainstorm ideas

Writing the book (November-December)

1. The rough draft
2. Revising
3. Rewriting (if necessary)
4. Editing (peer and individual editing techniques)
5. Parental involvement (Parents may be inserviced to aid in editing, taking dictation, preparing manuscripts, binding books, etc.)

The final copy (January-February)

1. Size and shape of book
2. Type of print (regular or primary type, hand printed or written, word processor, etc.)
3. Illustrations
4. Binding

Additional types of writing activities (MARCH-APRIL)

Poetry
Jokes and Riddles
Plays

ACTIVITIES FOR THREE YOUNG AUTHORS CLUB MEETINGS

1. Getting Aquainted
2. Characterization
3. The 5 W's and Sentence Starters

GETTING AQUAINTED

1. After discussing why writing is fun, have each student design individual folder covers using "Name Acrostics." For example:

Marvelous

Agreeable

Rich

Young

Students write descriptions of themselves using each letter of their first names.

2. Interviews. Students choose partners and ask first factual questions such as:

How old are you? How do you feel about _____?

Who is your best friend?

What hobbies do you have?

Where is your favorite place to visit?

When have you had the most fun?

Then ask "Crazy" questions. Don't forget to use who, what, where, when, and why.

If you were a machine, what would you be and why?

If you were a color, what would you be and why?

How would you feel if you were an insect?

Who is your favorite adult? Why would you like to be him/her?

3. Riddles. Select an object in the room or bring a favorite object or picture of it to the meeting. Do several riddles together as a group. Discuss description, strange characteristics of selected objects, metaphors, similes, etc. Have students write a riddle and illustrate it if possible. For example:

I'm a mammal and a quadruped and an endangered species. I live by eating plants. My home is an island. I'm cute and cuddly as a doll with eyes as large as black saucers. Can you guess what I am? (A Koala Bear)

Riddle written by

_____

CHARACTERIZATION

A meeting discussing and writing about characters and characteristics can be very beneficial to the young author.

1. Read several story passages relating to description of characters, behavior, attributes, etc.

   James and the Giant Peach— Roald Dahl
   Dear Mr Henshaw— Beverly Cleary
   Isabelle the Itch— Constance Greene

2. Discuss the word usage of characteristics through metaphors and similes. Make a list of similes and metaphors.

   She's a regular adding machine.
   Her face turned white as a sheet.
   The baby's eyes twinkled like the stars.
   He was strong as an ox.
   Mr. Smith's bark is worse than his bite.

3. Brainstorm and make lists of words describing characters. The club sponsor should make these lists available to all club members either by posting lists in the meeting room or making copies for members to have in their folders. Descriptive words — fat, pale, plump, skinny, etc. Personality words — happy, friendly, rude, shy, etc.

4. Select a character (may be done individually, in small groups, or entire group). Take 5-10 minutes to think of the character's personality, behavior, looks, etc.

5. Write a description of the character. As students write, provide guidance by mentioning how does he/she walk, how will his/her voice sound, why would he/she be a good friend, etc.

6. Write questions to ask the character. For example:

   Where did you find your pet?
   Why do you wear such an old, black coat?
   What is your favorite food?

7. If time allows, draw a picture of the character. Put the picture and description in the student's folder. This may be used later in developing a story.

THE 5 W's
AND SENTENCE STARTERS

Understanding the "5 W's" (who, what, where, when, why) provides a base for writing interesting sentences and expanding ideas. Knowing a variety of words for starting sentences will help eliminate the overuse of "then," "next," and "and," etc.

1. With club members, discuss and make a list of words and/or phrases for starting sentences and for each "W." Some examples are:

WHO	WHAT	WHERE
Mother	the chair	on the floor
the coach	airplane	in the water
my class	skyscraper	around the block
the fireman	pencil and paper	down the road

WHEN	WHY	SENTENCE STARTERS	
someday	because she was ill	suddenly	before
tomorrow	to buy new clothes	meanwhile	sadly
after dark	to visit her cousin	later	soon
earlier this week	because she is hungry	carefully	recently
		finally	first, second...

2. Post these lists in the meeting room. Here club members add to the lists as often as possible.

3. As a writing activity for this meeting, have students write sentences using a word or phrase off each list. Allow time for members to share their sentences with others.

A HAPPY ENDING

(Culminating Activities)

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Students have worked hard making their books, and their work and efforts *must* be recognized. The following "publishing" (sharing and displaying books) ideas and recognition incentives and activities are ways that will reward children for their special efforts throughout the year. These suggestions provide opportunities for students to know that their ideas are of worth and valued by peers and others. It is important to help students realize they have truly become YOUNG AUTHORS.

BINDING BOOKS

Since the young author's book is a treasured item that will be handled and displayed, a sturdy cover is recommended. Listed are several ways to bind a book. The title or kind of book, number of pages, type of print, and intended audience should be considered in determining the kind of binding used.

Prepare for binding books by gathering materials throughout the school year. Have club members bring:

- fabric scraps
- *contact paper (clear and colored)
- cardboard
- wallpaper samples
- glue
- yarn and ribbon
- gift-wrapping ribbons

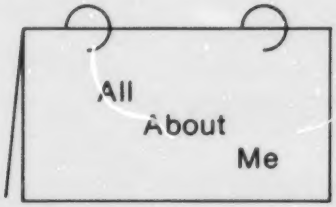
Be sure to have on hand:

- markers
- crayons
- stencils
- holepuncher
- brads
- tape
- scissors
- stick on letters
- rings

*If the books are going to be handled a lot, contact paper over any type of cover is recommended.

BOOKBINDING IDEAS

Staples

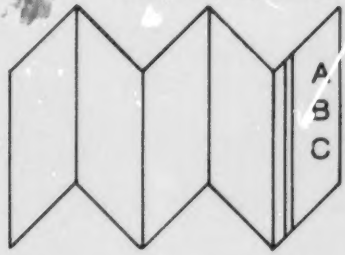


Rings

Brads

yarn or ribbon

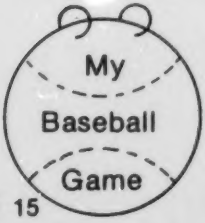
Accordian fold books

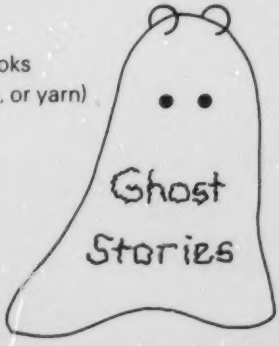


Contact paper, fabric or wallpaper

Manilla folder with plastic binder

Shape books
(use staples, rings, or yarn)





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SIMPLE BOOKBINDING

1. Cut tagboard into two pieces. (May also use posterboard, cardboard, or oak tab.) The two pieces should be about 1/2 inch larger all the way around than the pages of the book that are to be bound.

2. Cut a piece of contact paper larger than the two pieces of tagboard — (about three inches larger).

3. Lay tagboard on contact. Leave about 1/8 inch space between the pieces of tagboard. If pages to be bound are thicker than 1/8 inch, it may be necessary to use a spine between the two pieces of tagboard. A spine is a piece of tagboard the same length of the cover. The width is determined by the thickness of the pages.

4. Clip corners of contact paper and turn edges of contact paper over cover of book.

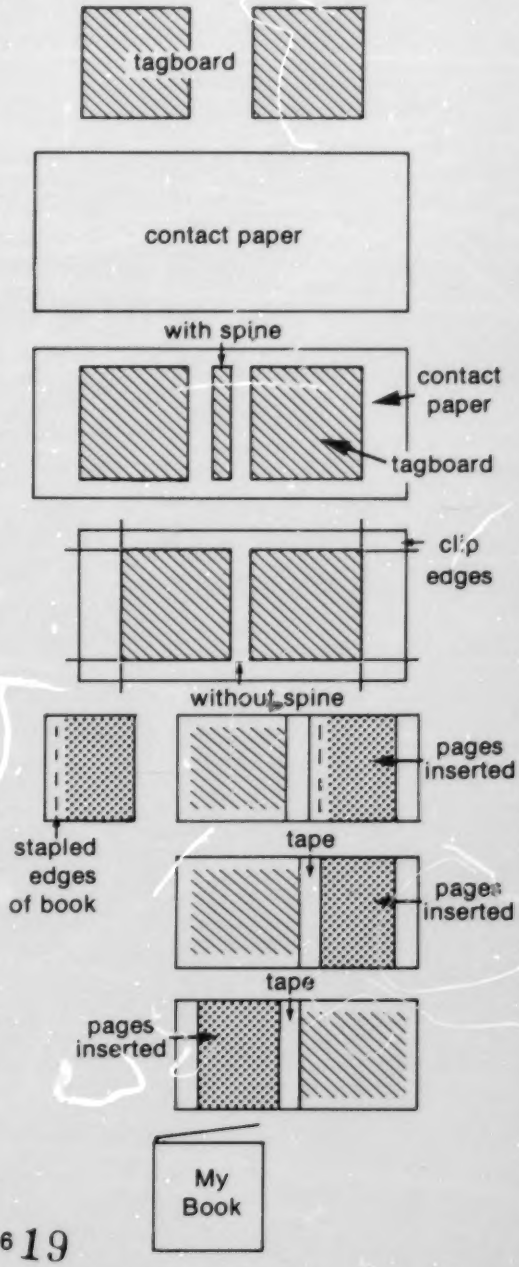
5. Staple story pages together as close to the edge as possible.

6. Insert pages in gap between the two covers or near the spine if a spine is used.

7. Cut two strips of contact paper the length of the book and about 2 inches wide or use tape. Use one strip to connect the stapled pages of the book to the front cover of the book.

8. Flip pages over and place second strip of contact paper (or tape) down the back side of the book connecting stapled edges to the back cover.

ALL DONE!



MAKING BOOKLETS WITH DRY MOUNT

1. Fold paper in half for pages.

2. Sew along dotted lines with needle and thread (some teachers are mass-producing all sizes and shapes using their sewing machines to sew paper.)

3. Cut cloth or wallpaper one inch larger than book pages (lay open and flat to measure).

4. Cut two pieces of cardboard (shirt cardboard works well) a little larger than pages.

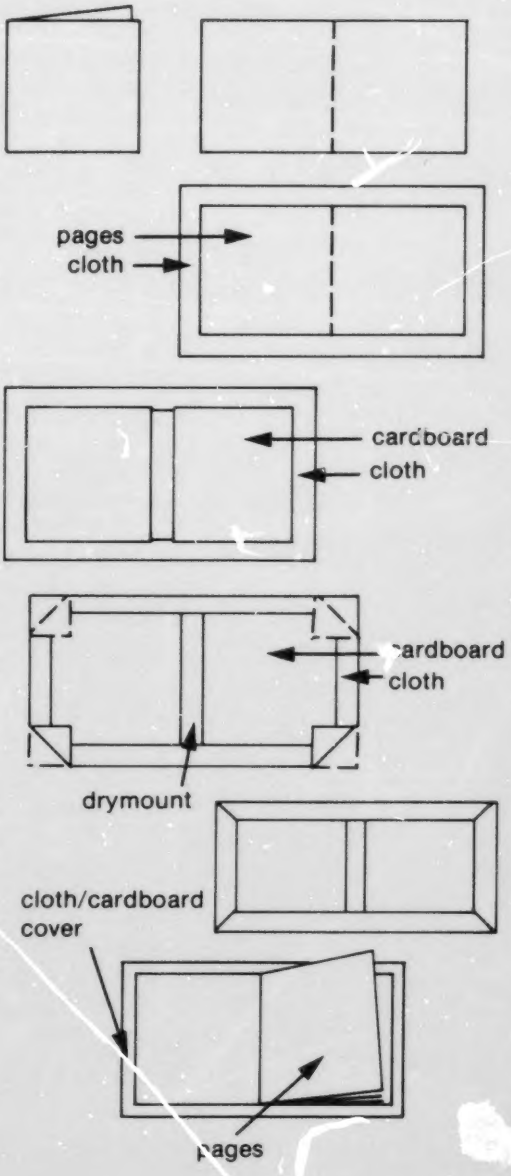
5. A piece of drymount is cut to fit between the cardboard and the cloth.

6. Lay cloth flat, place drymount on top, then cardboard pieces. Leave space between cardboard pieces to allow book to open and shut.

7. With iron, press a few places to hold cardboard in place.

8. Fold corners in, then fold top down and iron, then fold bottom up and iron.

9. Cut second piece of drymount the same size as open pages. Lay drymount on open cover; lay open pages on drymount, press first page then last page to the cover.



CAUTION: NEVER PLACE IRON ON DRY MOUNT OR IT WILL STICK TIGHT.

IDEAS TO SHARE AND DISPLAY BOOKS

Stickers, awards, certificates, medals, ribbons

Plaques listing names of Young Authors

Reading to other classes

Reading day at the mall

Reading at home

Display books in the school library, the local library, in other community facilities

Display books at shopping malls, doctors' and dentists' offices

"Read to the Principal Day" (or week)

Read over the school intercom to a grade level or total school

Names and pictures in district and local newspapers

Young Authors quilt

Parties and picnics

Make buttons, T-shirts, pennants and banners stating young author's name and/or book titles

Filmstrips or videotapes

Bookworm

Plan a School Building conference or program for all youngsters who participated

Participate in District and State Conferences

Have a special lunch with the Principal and possibly the Superintendent

By the end of May, Young Authors Club members should have a strong self-concept and sense of accomplishment from writing, sharing and displaying their work. Pride in their work and self-motivation to continue writing are two major indicators of a successful Young Authors Club.